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PAPERS

IN

POLITE ARTS.

N° I.

METHOD OF PRESERVING OIL-COLOURS.

The SILVER MEDAL AND TEN GUINEAS were this Session presented to Mr. James Harris of Plymouth, for his Method of preserving Oil Colours, for the Use of Artists, in Syringes, instead of the Bladders in which they are commonly kept. One of the Syringes is placed in the Repository of the Society.

THE oil colours employed by artists are generally sold in bladders, which, while entire, preserve most of them in a state fit for use. The colour is got out as it is wanted by puncturing the bladder, and then pressing it till as much has exuded as the artist has present occasion for. But after being punctured the air is very apt to get into the bladder, and by

combining with the paint to thicken it, and render it in a greater or less degree unfit for use. Some colours are kept under water; but this practice is not applicable to those in the composition of which the lakes and Prussian blue are employed as ingredients, for these, both in bladders and under water, are very liable to become ropy, in which state they are no longer serviceable.

The idea suggested itself to Mr. Harris of preserving oil-colours in syringes of tin, or of brass well tinned internally, by which he expected to attain the advantages of perfect exclusion from the air and from the light, whether the quantity in the syringe was much or little, also of greater cleanliness and of a more perfect separation of one colour from another than usually takes place when the bladders containing them get torn by use. He accordingly got a few sets made, and put them into the hands of artists, who, after a competent trial, expressed their satisfaction with them, finding them to possess the expected advantages, and also that the lakes and other tender colours might be kept in them without deterioration.

Three of these certificates are subjoined, together with a description of the instrument as represented in Plate VI.

CERTIFICATES.

11, New Cavendish-street, SIR; Jan. 29th, 1823.

I HAVE great pleasure in testifying, after a trial of more than seven months, my entire approval of Mr. Harris's invention for the preservation of oil-colours. I have found it completely effect the desired purpose of keeping the colour in a fit state for use; it is a much more cleanly mode, and, being

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subject to no waste, more economical, than any other I am acquainted with.

In justice to the inventor of this useful article, I must add, that I write this not at his desire, but at the suggestion of Mr. Solly.

To A. Aikin, Esq. Secretary, &c. &c. I am, Sir, &c. &c. &c. W. Collins.

SIR;

31, Gerrard-street, March 20th, 1822.

HAVING for some time used your syringes for oil-colours, I have great pleasure in assuring you they have my entire approval, and I feel confident they will be found to possess great advantages over the skins in which oil-colours have been usually kept.

I am, Sir,

&c. &c. &c.

Mr. James Harris.

John King, Artist.

Russell-square, March 21st, 1822.

MR. HARRIS's invention for the longer preservation of prepared oil-colours, appears to me to be equally ingenious and useful, and at my desire he has ordered a set of cases to be made for my immediate use.

THOMAS LAWRENCE, P. R. A.

Reference to the Engraving .- Plate VI.

Fig. 9 represents the syringe in use; g g, the cylinder, on the top of which is screwed the cap h; i; a screw which serves instead of a piston rod; k, a handle with a square hole, fitting easy on the squared top of the screw, in order to turn it; l, the piston, shown by dotted lines; m, the jet through which the paint oozes, whenever the piston is advanced, by turning the screw i; n, a screw-nut to secure the jet when out of use.

Fig. 10, a bird's-eye view of the piston, showing the brass cross-plate o, with a hollow to receive the end of the screw.

Fig 11 is a section of the piston, which is made of cork, covered with soft leather; a second leather, p p, is wrapped round it, and sewed at top and bottom to the first; a plate of metal, q, well tinned, is put at the bottom, and secured by the two screws r r, going through the cross-plate o and the cork, which latter, by this means, is kept from elongating, and thereby its lateral pressure is preserved.

When the syringe is to be charged with paint, the screw-nut n, and the screw cap h, are taken off, and the piston is drawn out by the hooks, fig. 12, which catch in the eye-headed screws r r; it is then filled with paint to the top, and the piston is laid on, and gently pressed; as much paint will then coze out of the jet as to allow the piston to go in level with the top; the cap h is then screwed on (the screw i being drawn up to the last thread), and it is ready for use. The inside is tinned, to prevent the oil acting on the brass.